

REMARKS

Claims 1, 2 and 4-20 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claim 1 is amended and claim 3 is canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claim 21 has been added. No new matter is added. Reconsideration based on the amendment and following remarks is respectfully requested.

I. Personal Interview

Applicants greatly appreciate the courtesies extended to Applicants' representative, Ms. Saltiel, by Examiner Leung at the interview held September 5, 2007. The reasons presented at the interview as warranting favorable action are incorporated into the remarks below and constitute Applicants' record of the interview.

With regard to the §112 rejection, Examiner Leung asserted that the specification fails to disclose slits wherein the length is twice the width as presently recited, and that Applicants are restricted to claiming the slit widths and lengths disclosed in the specification. Specifically, Examiner Leung argued that the claim ratio of a slit having a length that is at least twice the width improperly adds new subject matter. Despite our argument to the contrary, Examiner Leung maintained her position during the personal interview. Applicants greatly appreciate Examiner Leung's efforts double-checking her analysis with an employee of the PTO's "quality control."

Applicants respectfully submit that the claims as amended obviate the §112 rejection. Nonetheless, Applicants note that the previous language is proper wherein the recited ratio lays claim to any to any ratio, i.e., a slit having any length, whilst the specification indicates lengths on the orders of millimeters, and at most 30 mm. Such claim language is proper, and there is no uncertainty as to the nature of the slits. Indeed, it is clear that what is claimed is slits having a width to length ratio of at least 1:2. Products having slits greater than the lengths that go in the specification would still be within the bounds of the independent

claims, and it is improper to read limitations of the specification into the claims. The specification states preferable links. That is all.

With regard to the §103 rejections, Applicants argue during the personal interview that there is no motivation to combine the teachings of Fujita and Fleck with Higuchi because Fujita and Fleck relate to thermal shock resistance whereas Higuchi relates to thermal expansion of materials. Moreover, the slits of Fujita are too narrow to accommodate the solutions afforded by the presently claimed combination of features. Any one of the asserted references is silent as to the problems caused by repeating the cycle of trapping/collecting of particulates by filter and regeneration of filter. See, e.g., paragraph [0023].

Moreover, Applicants respectfully submit that the Office Action appears to overlook the meritorious advantage brought by the provision of plugging portions at both ends. That is, if the structure is plugged at either one of two ends, one should always pay attention to which end has been plugged until the filter is actually mounted in an automobile. However, in case of the filter where two ends are plugged, there is no necessity of paying attention as to the plugged end. As previously asserted in the Office Action response filed on August 3, 2007, ashes formed by a regeneration step accumulate at the downstream of the honeycomb structure. Thus, the provision of slits on the downstream side, i.e., at the vicinity of plugging portions on the downstream side, is most effective for the removal of the accumulated ashes in case of DPF. However, it is usually impossible to identify on which side the slits are formed after canning in the case because the presence of the slits cannot be checked without taking out the honeycomb structure from the case. With the slits disposed on both ends, one may easily remove ashes, without worrying about the provision side of the slits. Thus, we believe this advantage distinguishes the presently claimed combination of features over the asserted art of record.

In light of the foregoing, and as a supplement to the Office Action response of August 3, 2007, withdrawal of the rejections is respectfully requested.

II. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of the claims are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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Date: September 19, 2007

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